

Keating Defends CIA For Cuba Crisis Role

Attempt To Get 'Scapegoat' Seen By Senator;
McCone Praised and McNamara Assailed

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(Washington Bureau of The Sun)

Washington, March 4 — The Central Intelligence Agency was defended today by Senator Keating (R., N.Y.) in the growing congressional debate over the role of the Defense Department and the CIA in the October Cuban crisis.

"There are disturbing indications that an attempt is being made to use the intelligence community as a scapegoat and whipping boy for the present crisis of confidence in the Government's handling of the Cuban situation," Keating declared.

"In my judgment," he added, "we would be placing the onus on the wrong source if we blamed the fact gatherers rather than the policy makers for the failure to give the American people an accurate and complete picture of Communist activities in Cuba."

Hits McNamara

The New York Republican was as lavish in his praise of John A. McCone, CIA director, as he was severe in denouncing Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense.

Meanwhile, Representative Rogers (D., Fla.) continued his criticism of the CIA and proposed once again that a congressional

watchdog committee be established to oversee the operations of the intelligence agency.

He said the CIA "is becoming the subject of legitimate questions being asked throughout the Congress and the entire nation."

The controversy came to the fore last week after the Pentagon confirmed a report that the aerial surveillance mission over Cuba was transferred from the CIA to the Air Force early last October.

More Planes Cited

According to the Defense Department, the shift came one or two days before October 14—the date on which the Air Force obtained photographic evidence of the Soviet offensive missile build-up in Cuba.

McNamara as well as Senator Stennis (D., Miss.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Preparedness subcommittee, subsequently insisted that the transfer was made solely because the Air Force had more planes available than the CIA.

But this explanation failed to satisfy Rogers, who asked why

the Air Force in a few days could obtain data that the CIA failed to get when it was in charge for the surveillance mission.

Noting that both services operated under comparable weather conditions, Rogers said "the implication clearly exists that CIA may have been the stopgap which accounted for the time lag in which the Russians almost completed their missile installations in Cuba."

Opposite Tack Taken

Keating took an opposite tack in his Senate speech today, apparently because he suspected the Pentagon or some Administration officials were trying to put the CIA on the spot.

"As new and alarming information on Cuba comes to light, many persons are asking if the United States suffers from an 'intelligence gap,'" he asserted.

"It is becoming clearer each day that no such gap exists. The events of the past year, as the story of Soviet-Cuban aggression has slowly and painfully unwound, have shown that our intelligence community is hard at work, producing accurate information—in other words, 'doing the job.'"

"We do suffer, however, from the unwillingness of our top officials to believe what our intelligence produces, from deliberate attempts to gloss over facts revealed by our intelligence, and in some instances deliberate attempts to suppress information entirely."

"Reliable Reports"

Keating went on to cite "reliable reports" that McCone as early as last August was warning that the Soviets probably would place offensive missiles in Cuba.

"As substantiation for his position gradually came into public view — first through unchecked refugee reports, then through thoroughly checked intelligence material, and later through statements of alarmed members of Congress of both parties — our Government 'kept busy denying everything,'" the Senator declared.

Keating was one of the more outspoken "alarmed members of Congress" when he said last September that he had evidence of an offensive missile build-up in Cuba.

He also took such an active part in warning the country last month of continuing Soviet military activities that McCone had

at least three private conversations with the CIA director.

McCone and Allen W. Dulles,

C.I.A., are Republicans.

As a result, members of the G.O.P. long have been sensitive to suggestions that Dulles was responsible for the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion of April, 1961, or that McCone was lax in obtaining evidence of the missile build-up leading to the October crisis.

Over the weekend Representative Ford (R., Mich.) reiterated charges being made in some Republican circles that the Administration had information about the missile build-up as early as mid-September but did nothing until after October 14.

"A Very Peculiar Odor"

He blamed both the CIA and the Defense Department, asserting: "The whole situation has a very peculiar odor."

GOP spokesmen in the past — including Representative Wilson (R., Cal.), head of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee — have come close to accusing the Kennedy Administration of timing the Cuban crisis with an eye to last November's elections.

Keating today made no reference to the role of McNamara, a registered Republican when he took office, in the missile affair.

Instead, he lashed out anew at the Secretary of Defense for his statement of February 6 that he had no evidence that Cuba is being used as a base for subversion directed against Latin American countries.

Keating said McNamara's "incredible" assertion had been "contradicted" February 19 by McCone, who told a House subcommittee that "Fidel Castro is spurring and supporting the efforts of Communists and other revolutionary elements to overthrow and seize control of the governments in Latin America."

"Another Example"

"This is another example of many striking instances in which high Government officials have first denied, then admitted, facts I have disclosed about Soviet activities in Cuba," the New York Senator contended.

"These examples strongly suggest that the crisis of confidence now existing is more than the result of refusal to convey hard truths to the American public than any gap in our intelligence capabilities."

Keating did not mention in his Senate speech that McCone had told the House subcommittee he had no evidence that weapons in Cuba were being used to transport from Cuba to other Latin American countries.